

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

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FM AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1655

C O N F I D E N T I A L STOCKHOLM 3854

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PARM, MNUC, SW
SUBJECT: GOS EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER NEUTRON BOMB

REF: STOCKHOLM 3853

1. SHORTLY BEFORE FOREIGN MINISTER SODER MADE UN ASSOCIATION
SPEECH SEPTEMBER 9 (REFTEL), MFA POLITICAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR
KNUT THYBERG TELEPHONED CHARGE TO INFORM HIM THAT SPEECH
WOULD BE MADE AND WOULD CONTAIN PASSAGE ON SO-CALLED NEUTRON
BOMB. THYBERG SAID FRANKLY THAT PRESSURE HAD BEEN BUILDING
UP FROM PUBLIC OPINION AND FROM THE POLITICAL SITUATION AND
THAT THE GOS HAD DECIDED THAT "CONCERN" SHOULD BE EXPRESSED.
THYBERG SAID THE REMARKS WERE NOT MEANT TO BE DIRECTED
AGAINST THE US, AND WERE DRAFTED SO AS TO REPRESENT THE
"LEAST COMMON DENOMINATOR" OF OPINION ON THIS ISSUE. HE
INDIRECTLY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THERE HAD BEEN MUCH PULLING-AND-
HAULING WITHIN THE GOS ON THE ISSUE BY SAYING THAT IT WAS
FINALLY DECIDED TO ADD THE PASSAGE ON THE NEUTRON BOMB
AT THE LAST MINUTE, AND THAT LANGUAGE WAS WORKED
OUT AT THE HOTEL IN SUNDSVALL (WHERE MRS. SODER WAS
ACCOMPANYING THE CHIEFS OF MISSION ON AN MFA-SPONSORED
TRIP) ON SEPT 7. THYBERG ADDED THAT SINCE MRS. SODER
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WAS GOING TO EAST BERLIN NEXT WEEK, AND WOULD BE UNDER
PRESSURE ON THIS ISSUE, IT WAS FELT WISE TO HAVE THE
GOS VIEW ON RECORD BEFORE THE TRIP RATHER THAN AFTER.
CHARGE THNKED HIM FOR THE CALL AND SAID WE WOULD STUDY
THE SPEECH CAREFULLY.

2. COMMENT. ON THE ONE HAND, THIS EXPRESSION OF GOS

CONCERN OVER THE SO-CALLED "NEUTRON BOMB" IS NOT SURPRISING, GIVEN THE TRADITIONAL SWEDISH OPPOSITION TO ALL WEAPONS DEVELOPMENTS WHICH CAN BE SEEN (EVEN IF ERRONEOUSLY) AS "FURTHERING THE ARMS RACE." THE EMBASSY HAS WATCHED THE GROWTH OF NEGATIVE PUBLIC OPINION WITH SOME CONCERN, SINCE WE FEEL THE PROS AND CONS HAVE BEEN POORLY AIRED. (WE HAVE SUPPLIED ALL THE INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON THE ISSUE TO THE MEDIA AND TO OUR CONTACTS WITHIN THE GOS, BUT IT IS HARD TO FIGHT AGAINST THE NEGATIVE TIDE, PARTICULARLY SINCE WEST GERMAN OPINION AS REFLECTED HERE HAS HAD SUCH A STRONG NEGATIVE ELEMENT.) CONSIDERING TRADITIONAL SWEDISH VIEWS, AND LOOKING AT UPCOMING EVENTS (THE VISIT TO THE GDR, THE UNGA, THE FALL GENERAL DEBATE IN THE RIKSDAG, THE UN SPECIAL SESSION ON DISARMAMENT), WE CAN SEE THE REASONING THAT LED THE GOS TO MAKE THIS PUBLIC STATEMENT.

3. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE ARE DISAPPOINTED THAT THE GOS YIELDED TO PUBLIC OPINION PRESSURE AND POLITICAL NECESSITY TO MAKE A STATEMENT WHICH IS HARDLY HELPFUL TO THE SITUATION. THIS IS PROBABLY THE FIRST "NEW" ISSUE ON WHICH THE NON-SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT HAS ADOPTED A PUBLIC STANCE CRITICAL OF THE USG (EVEN IF ONLY MILDLY SO BY SWEDISH STANDARDS) AND IT SEEMS TO THE EMBASSY THAT MORE CONSULTATION COULD HAVE TAKEN PLACE. THIS STATEMENT IS PROBABLY MUCH MILDER THAN A STATEMENT
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A SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE ISSUED, BUT ANY STATEMENT AT ALL IS SOMETHING OF A DISAPPOINTMENT. WE ARE IMPRESSED THAT AT LEAST SOME MODERATE PARTY FRIENDS FOUGHT AGAINST THE STATEMENT.

4. REQUEST FOR INSTRUCTIONS. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES IT WOULD BE INAPPROPRIATE TO LET THIS GOS STATEMENT PASS BY WITHOUT NOTICE. TO DO SO WOULD BE TO LET OUR CLOSE FRIENDS WITHIN THE GOS FIGHT THE BATTLE WITHOUT ANY SUPPORT, AND IT MIGHT TEMPT THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT TO THINK THAT WE WILL ACCEPT ANY OF THEIR ACTIONS TOUCHING OUR INTERESTS WITHOUT CRITICISM. WE DOUBT THAT A "PROTEST" IS CALLED FOR, BUT WE BELIEVE A STATEMENT EXPRESSING OUR DISAPPOINTMENT, COMBINED WITH A REQUEST THAT THE GOS STUDY THE ISSUE OF THE "NEUTRON BOMB" MORE CAREFULLY, WOULD BE USEFUL. SUCH A STATEMENT COULD BE MADE TO SWEDISH AMBASSADOR WACHTMEISTER IN WASHINGTON, BUT WE ALSO BELIEVE THAT TO MAINTAIN THE EMBASSY'S CREDIBILITY WE SHOULD BE INSTRUCTED TO MAKE SOME DEMARCHE HERE. WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE GOOD TO GET THIS OUT OF THE WAY BEFORE THE AMBASSADOR ARRIVES SEPT 18, SO WE REQUEST INSTRUCTIONS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

PERRY

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